



U.S. Small Business Administration
Seattle District Office

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U.S. Small Business Administration Announces Western Washington Small Business Winners for 2003

February 5, 2003 (Seattle, Washington) – The Seattle District Office of the U.S. Small Business Administration has announced the Western Washington Small Business Person and Advocate winners for 2003. Larry Wickkiser, President, Airporter Shuttle/Bellair Charters in Bellingham has been named Western Washington Small Business Person of the Year.

Winners of the small business advocate awards are as follows: Financial Services Advocate, Janie E. Sacco, KeyBank in Tacoma; Home-Based Business Advocate, Kathy Gilman, Washington CASH in Seattle; Research Advocate, Dr. Kenneth D. Walters, Professor of Business, University of Washington, Bothell Business Program; Small Business Journalist, Clayton Park, *King County Journal* in Bellevue; Veteran Small Business Advocate, Edward T. Ebel, Salmon Computers, Inc., Bellevue; and Women In Business Advocate, Amy L. Stanton, The Alaris Group, LLC in Seattle.

“We are extremely proud of all our award winners,” said SBA Seattle District Director, Bob Meredith. “They represent the broad small business constituency of Western Washington. They will now compete for state, regional, and national awards which will take place in the next few weeks. We look forward to honoring our winners at an awards gala to be held in Seattle on May 29.” A panel of judges selected each winner based on several criteria, including staying power, growth in number of employees, increase in sales or volume, innovation, response to adversity, and evidence of contributions to community-oriented projects. National winners in each of the award categories will be announced during National Small Business week in Washington, D.C. in September.

“I am proud to have received this award from the SBA,” said Larry Wickkiser, after being notified that he had been named 2003 Western Washington small business person of the year. “It’s both exciting and a great honor, especially considering the quality of the companies nominated for this award. My family and my employees share in the honor with me because I couldn’t have done it without them. We look forward to serving the residents and visitors of Washington State in the years ahead.” Wickkiser and his father bought the business in 1985. The company has 70 employees, operates more than 30 vehicles, and transports about 100,000 passengers a year, including runs from Bellingham to SeaTac Airport.

The annual SBA awards competition is held in conjunction with National Small Business Week, which the President declares as a special opportunity to honor the nation's small business owners. This year Small Business Week will be celebrated September 15-19.

The U.S. Small Business Administration, established in 1953, provides financial, technical and management assistance to help Americans start, run, and grow their businesses. In the Pacific Northwest, the SBA's five district offices have a portfolio of business loans, loan guarantees and disaster loans totaling approximately \$2 billion.

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